

First Parish Church (Unitarian)
northwest corner at intersection
of U. S. Route 1 and State
Route 35
Kennebunk
York County
Maine

HABS No. ME-124

HABS
ME,
16-KEN,
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

APPENDIX
FOLLOWS

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

FIRST PARISH CHURCH (UNITARIAN)

HABS No. ME-124

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ME
16-KEN,
1-

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. This structure is owned by the First Congregational Parish Unitarian and is situated on the northwest side of intersection of U.S. 1 and Maine 35, facing traffic circle, opposite the Brick Store Museum, Kennebunk, York County, Maine.
2. The church is occupied by the Unitarian Congregation and used for church services and related activities.

B. Chain of Title and Dates: Men of the Kennebunk area petitioned in 1744 for exemption from the ministerial tax in Wells Township in order to found their own parish. In 1750 they achieved their aim and their act of incorporation was approved by the Massachusetts General Court that year. Thirty-five men submitted the petition, of whom 21 were members of the church when it was consecrated March 1751 (See Remich, History of Kennebunk, for details.) One building was in use by 1749; the beginnings of the present one were built in 1772. The Parish has owned the property continuously, sale of pews usually financing additions and determining membership. Between 1925 and 1932 a final transfer of all private pews to the church was made.

2. Date: First building 1749-50, second building, 1772-1800, great changes in second building, 1803 and again in 1838.

C. Architects, Builders etc.: James Hubbard was in charge of the first building. Thomas Eaton, a house carpenter, was in charge of the extension of the second building in 1803. Paul Revere & Sons cast the bell installed in 1804. Israel Downing, according to a note in the Brick Store Museum Library, carved the mahogany pulpit from a huge log from San Domingo, about 1850.

D. Original plans and alterations:

1. The first building was two stories, 30 feet long, with its side to the road. It was not clapboard and the upper story was not glazed. It had a porch on the front, five windows above, and two on either side. In 1755 galleries were finished in that building and in 1756 two windows were added in back and the pulpit was raised.
2. In 1772 the new meeting house was begun, 56' x 44', two stories high with a porch on the front, 46 pews on the lower floor and 24 in the gallery. The services were moved to the new building in 1773 although it was not finished. In 1799 several committees to superintend various aspects of the building were discharged but the building was still unfinished. After a

quarter century "50 parish meetings had been held to adopt, annul, or modify votes in relation to it. And now it would appear that the structure was not only incomplete but generally unsatisfactory." (Remich, History of Kennebunk.) During this period the building had contained all square pews, arranged between three aisles. The front of the galleries, pulpit, and deacons seat were painted, the rest was plain. The outside was painted dark yellow. In the pews were hinged seats which folded up when the congregation stood to pray and came down with a resounding crash in near unison when the prayer was over. There were also headrests on unstable props, which sometime collapsed under relaxed nappers.

3. In 1803 the church was sawed in two and the back section moved 28' away. Walls were built connecting the two sections, a new roof was put over the whole, finishing both interior and exterior was begun, and a tower was built up to the first floor of the belfry. The bell was hung in fall of 1804, and is said to have been heard 11 miles away at Shaker Hill during a fire in 1824. Maine's only other bells then were at York and Portland. In 1810 a small organ made by the self-taught Dr. Joshua Furbish of Wells was added. At this time 16 square pews were added and also 10 long ones to each side, there already being 3 long pews per side by then. In 1820 there were repairs and the exterior and part of the interior were painted. In 1821 two stoves were added and blinds (shutters) for the windows.
4. In 1838 the church was remodelled, as the large size had made it difficult for speakers to make themselves heard. The church was also thought old fashioned, having so few long pews and so many square pews, a pulpit so high it took many steps to reach it, and galleries which were unnecessary and unsightly. So the galleries were removed and a floor was laid over the interior about 10 feet above the sills. The lower floor was left for awhile (except for pews and pulpit) and was used for town and other public meetings. Pulpit, pews and choir were added upstairs, and later carpets and chandeliers. The ground floor was later (date unknown) divided into a west side for meetings and also Sunday School, a parish library, kitchen with closets etc.; and the east side for a vestry with seats, pulpit etc. and behind this a room doubling as sitting room and Sunday School library, later used as Parish library. When the 1838 changes were made, the windows were enlarged and new blinds (shutters) hung. By 1911 the congregation had also closed up a doorway on the west and removed steps leading to it, and closed up two doors, one on each side of the basement of the tower. By 1857 and 1864 furnaces were added. The mahogany pulpit and crimson curtains were added in 1850 and renewed in 1929.

- E. Views: On a wall on the ground floor of the church is a plan of the pews, 1803-38, and a reconstructed view of the interior looking toward the pulpit, as it was 1803-38, and a reconstructed view of the exterior 1772-1803. A pamphlet "An Ancient New England Meeting House" (Old Colony Press, Boston, Mass., n.d.) shows an old view of the church, a photo of the 1850-1904 pulpit, and one of the bell. Views of the church are in "Old Houses of Kennebunk and Kennebunkport" (The Brick Store Museum, Kennebunk, Maine, 1939) and in Maine, (American Guide Series, Works Progress Administration, Riverside Press, Cambridge, Mass. 1937).
- F. Sources: Other than detailed above: Edward G. Bourne, The History of Wells and Kennebunk from the Earliest Settlement to 1820, B. Thurston & Co., Portland, Maine, 1875. Daniel Remich, History of Kennebunk...to 1890, 1911. Both are in the Brick Store Museum Library, Kennebunk, Maine.

Prepared by: Martha Kingsbury
HABS Maine III
1965

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. This structure is an outstanding example of early religious architecture of the mid-18th century. Although extensively modified in plan and section, the details of the interior and tower are especially valuable.
2. Condition of fabric: Excellent.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. This structure is a large two-story frame church, with the entrance through the base of a square clock and bell tower. The clock and spire portion of the tower is octagonal in plan, topped with a segmental dome and pinnacle. Windows have louvered shutters. The building is 85'-0 x 151'-0", facing a traffic circle and in front of Hope Cemetery. A wing, composed of a shed and gable roofed structure, projects at the rear of the building.
2. Foundations: The foundation walls are rubble granite stone, probably on bedrock.
3. Wall construction: Wood frame covered with clapboards, rived and machined, with lapped joints.

4. Porches, stoops, bulkheads, etc.: The entrance steps are of wood with turned newels and balusters and molded hand rails.
5. Chimneys: Two red brick chimneys, corbelled caps.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Entrance doorway has two paneled doors, 8 panels each. The casing is moulded with targets at the upper corners.
 - b. Windows and shutters: Windows are double hung, 6/6 and 9/6. First floor windows have two operating shutters per opening, with a fixed louvered panel at the head or sill of all openings. Second floor windows have two shutters per opening. Shutters are of wood painted dark green. At the rear of the building a Palladian-like pattern of wood surrounds occur, with pintles remaining at the center opening.
7. Roof:
 - a. Gable Roof, covered with black composition shingles.
 - b. Cornice and eaves: Simple boxed cornice at long edges of roof, no overhang at gable ends.
 - c. Tower: The bell and clock tower is on-center at gable (front) end and serves as entrance. It extends above the roof to a boxed cornice projection at the floor of the belfry. The belfry has four arched openings in walls of flush horizontal siding, projecting molding at the springline, simulated keystone and balustrades. The belfry has a boxed cornice at its roof with a balustrade of four corner posts with wood urns, turned balusters and molded railing. The spire is octagonal with pairs of composite columns and projected entablature occurring at four corners. Round black clock faces with numerals, minute markings, and gilded hands occur in front and side elevations. The clock portion of spire has an octagonal lantern, elliptical opening, boxed cornice, segmental dome roof of sheet metal painted green, and a wood pinnacle terminated with a ball and weathervane. The weathervane is of iron and wood, gilded, has a wood ball and lightning rod as finial.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plan: Rectangular with wing on the north rear.

- a. Basement: Partial basement to accomodate heating system. Granite monolithic piers, cement floor, stone walls and plaster ceiling.
- b. Ground floor: Entrance through base of tower into stair hall, two runs to first floor sanctuary and into social hall-auditorium, parlor, study, library-nursery, storage and wing. Turned wood columns and pipe columns probably mark location of original gallery line.
- c. First floor: Stair halls into sanctuary. This space is dominated by the pulpit and chancel, by the choir loft and organ assembly to the rear, and the boxed pews occurring in three major sections paralleling the sanctuary and two small sections at the front perpendicular at sides of chancel.

Access to the tower is at ground floor level by ladder. The roof framing system, fragments of earlier construction and interior wall finish is exposed in the tower area.

- 2. Stairways: Two straight runs of 17 risers. No significance. Basement stair.
- 3. Flooring: Pine boards of various widths, painted, varnished or carpeted.
- 4. Walls: Plaster and plaster with wood board wainscot. Plaster is applied to riven boards. Plaster walls are painted with patterns to represent three dimensional ornament, including pilasters, moldings and niches.
- 5. Ceilings: Plaster. Sanctuary ceiling is a flat elliptical vault with grisaille to simulate classic ornament in moldings, floral cartouches and medallions.
- 6. Doors: Four, six and eight panel wood doors, one or two per opening.
- 7. Trim: Box pews in the sanctuary have molded rails; backs and partitions of boards about 20" wide, doors and ends are paneled. Brass numerals. Palladian window behind pulpit, mirrored glass panes, double hung sash at each central window. Turned wood columns, ground floor.
- 8. Hardware: Organ, 1900. Variety of thumb latches and modern hardware. Bell was cast by Paul Revere & Sons, Boston. Clock works by E. Brown & Co., Boston.
- 9. Lighting: Modern electric except for oil lamp chandeliers of brass and bracket lamps in sanctuary wired for electricity.

10. Heating: Modern hot water.

D. Site:

1. The church faces southeast overlooking a traffic circle bound by U.S. 1, Maine 35 and 9A and opposite the Brick Store Museum and Town Hall. To the west and north of the building is an old graveyard.
2. Enclosure: Cast iron and pipe fence, of no significance. No landscaping.

Prepared by: F. Blair Reeves
HABS Maine III
July, 1965

Addendum to:

FIRST PARISH CHURCH (UNITARIAN)

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York County

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National Park Service
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Data pages 1 through 6 were previously transmitted to the Library of Congress. This is data page 7.

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LC-HABS-GS05-T-1736-201L *	EAST (FRONT) ELEVATION -- LEVEL
LC-HABS-GS05-T-1736-201R	EAST (FRONT) ELEVATION -- LEVEL
	Left and right overlap: 75%
LC-HABS-GS05-T-1736-202L *	EAST (FRONT) ELEVATION -- INCLINED
LC-HABS-GS05-T-1736-202R	EAST (FRONT) ELEVATION -- INCLINED
	Left and right overlap: 75%

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LC-HABS-GS05-T-1736-203L *	ANGLE VIEW FROM NE -- LEVEL
LC-HABS-GS05-T-1736-203R	ANGLE VIEW FROM NE -- LEVEL
	Left and right overlap: 90%
LC-HABS-GS05-T-1736-204L	ANGLE VIEW FROM NE -- INCLINED
LC-HABS-GS05-T-1736-204R	ANGLE VIEW FROM NE -- INCLINED
	Left and right overlap: 85%
LC-HABS-GS05-T-1736-205L *	ANGLE VIEW FROM SE
LC-HABS-GS05-T-1736-205R	ANGLE VIEW FROM SE
	Left and right overlap: 85%
LC-HABS-GS05-T-1736-206L *	ANGLED VIEW OF REAR FROM NE
LC-HABS-GS05-T-1736-206R	ANGLED VIEW OF REAR FROM NE
	Left and right overlap: 80%

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